

Cook County Gun Violence Task Force
Public Haring
Mar. 22, 2016

I) MEMBERS PRESENT

Brandon Neme, Cook County State's Attorney's office
Thomas Mahoney, Cook County State's Attorney's office
Ernest Brown, Dir. of Homeland Security and Emergency Management for Cook County
Hazel Crest Police Chief Mitchell Davis
Dr. Beverly Butler of the Chief Judge's office
Evanston Police Chief Richard Eddington
John Gates, Cook County Medical Examiner's Office
Dr. Kim Joseph, Stroger Hospital.
Lake County, Ind., Sheriff John Buncich Sheriff Tom Dart
Cook County Commissioner Richard Boykin
Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart

ABSENT: Father Michael Fleger not attending

II) OPENING

At 2:30 p.m., Task Force Coordinator Mike Anton called a quorum.

III) PUBLIC COMMENT An individual requested public comment. Mr. George Blakemore agreed to wait until after the other speakers had said their part.

IV) CRIME LAB REPORT TESTIMONY

Professor Harold Pollack, co-director of University of Chicago's Crime Lab, discussed findings from his recent paper on gun violence. He has conducted a number of studies in Cook County, and his comments reflected his own views rather than the organizations or the funders. Professor Pollack stated: Gun violence reinforces every public health and economic challenge. Firearms account for 3/4s of area homicides and play a role in suicides.

In addition to the immediate victims, gun violence has profound indirect effects on family members. Youth who witness gun violence can experience post-traumatic stress. Every child was given a detailed mental health assessment as part of HeadStart. Some participants were seeing a homicide once a week, just by their home. Within this group there was a lower attention span, less impact control and weaker social and emotional skills. They were not as prepared to learn well in school. Because of stress on their parents from the homicides, the parents were having a tougher time nurturing the children. Pat Sharpe and his colleagues have shown this immediate trauma results in lower test scores at schools after gun violence.

It's tough to get businesses into neighborhoods plagued by violence -- trying to get entrepreneurs to open a 7-11 in Roseland when they are worried about gun violence, he said.

There's also a paper by his colleague Steve Levitt and Berry-Cowen that shows that each homicide has the effect of pushing out 70 people out of a city. In other words, had Chicago had the same homicide rates since the 1970s, we'd have 200,000 more people. The Chicago Tribune had a paper on youth moving to Atlanta for the perception of safety. Perception is very important – though we are ranked 23rd in violent crime, while Atlanta is number 12, Chicagoans still move there for safety.

There is no question that we have a distinctive gun violence problem. We have a lot of guns on the street. The CPD recovers more guns than New York and LA put together. When the professor started the Crime Lab, he went through ME reports on homicides of young men. Many of these cases were just young guys getting into minor scuffles – but one guy had a gun and so the other ended up dead. Many of these deaths would not have happened if someone didn't have the gun on them at the time. There are ways of stopping young individuals from getting a firearm in Cook County. Most gun violence is committed by individuals that are prohibited possessors. People are getting guns in ways other than direct purchasing.

We can block a lot of those offenders from getting guns. The intent is not to stop the worst of the worst from getting guns. Rather, it's to stop young offenders from getting one because some adult close to them helps them get one. If no adult in their life is willing to help them, then they either would not get a gun or at least it would take them more time. Which in turn can give a pastor or social service worker more time to help the individual who is so desperate to get a gun.

One of the striking things in Crime Lab's report is that off the 99 people interviewed, 40% reported that they had been shot. These interviewees stated that there are so many people that are crazy, out there, with guns, intoning that they carried one themselves for the purpose of self defense. They said things along the lines of, "I'm afraid of those other guys -- I'd rather be judged by 12 than be carried by six."

The professor recommended policies that work on both a hard edge and a soft edge. First off, there has to be a deterrent message to the young guy that's going to go out and commit a UUW, that to do so is a bad idea. The professor believed that if someone doesn't think that he'll be harshly punished, that will change his mental calculation in a way that's more likely to lead him to purchasing a gun. An Ironic piece of "good news." Most of the young men they interviewed are relatively unsophisticated. They don't know much about guns or how you get guns.

The professor suggested that gun offenses and over-incarceration are topics to be upset over, as are excessive policing, use of force, and overly harsh treatment of detainees / prisoners. And that we have to deal with these issue as well because they are not disconnected from gun violence.

Ultimately, we can take an evidence-based optimism to the problem of gun violence in Cook County. There are ways to keep guns out of peoples' hands. And though you can't block any way off completely, there are a lot of ways to make it harder to get access to a gun.

These statements were followed by questions from the attendees, including one directed from Sheriff Tom Dart. The Sheriff had read the study and was blown away by certain parts of it, by the fact that there's a randomness to how guns are obtained and how unsophisticated the process is. He mentioned that the Lake County Sheriff was in attendance and had talked to him about ways to stem guns coming across the border. And it was a surprise because it is so random. That was frustrating, because there is not one pipeline. The other surprising takeaway was the cycling of guns – the act of using one in a homicide and getting rid of it to get a new one. Members of the Sheriff's team have been talking amongst themselves, and have some ideas. One action was to push something through the legislature, while another was to get ATF involved. The Sheriff ultimately wanted to know, if the professor could pick one or two small things that aren't the solution but could improve the problem, and could be quickly implemented on the front lines, what are the things that could be seen done?

The professor suggested that many of the people who contribute to the ecology of gun violence are easily deterred. A lot of the really bad things that are happening in Cook County are due to the

accumulation of small offenders. Could you increase penalties for straw purchasers? The crowd thought so, and responded with many exuberant affirmations. The Sheriff suggested that he had tried something small against straw purchasers, but ultimately didn't know where to go fishing for them. He wondered how you could narrow down the field.

The professor suggested that when a crime gun shows up, there begins a cost-benefit analysis as an investigator moves through the case. It often seems to be a waste of time for the investigator to dig deeply into the chain of custody of that gun once they have a perpetrator; but it may be useful to do that every so often in a very public way so that the person that is the initial purchaser of that gun feels that there is more of a risk after it slips out of his or her fingers.

The professor also suggested that with some of the UUW offenders, one has to be more stringent. He suggested that if you're carrying a gun, you're part of the ecology of gun violence, even if you do not use it. You are not a bad person but you are part of the problem.

The professor further suggested an increase in the probability that there will be a penalty associated with illegal gun crimes. An individual may be dissuaded if they're shown that they're at risk for serving some real time in prison.

Finally, the sheriff inquired as to whether the professor had seen guns going back over the Indiana border, into Indiana from Chicago. The professor responded that that is very hard to know. He suspected that they do travel back to Indiana. With the tracking system in place, law enforcement can trace the first person who bought the gun and the last person who used it, with no one in between. So the in-between is not quantified.

Following this line of questioning, Director Brown suggested that he'd found that there often was not sufficient evidence to prosecute a person. It is very difficult to prosecute people who are losing guns or letting their guns be stolen. He asked the professor if there is some behavioral analysis that would show criminal profiling of individuals surrounding a gun holder, such as friends and family, that would have an idea of what's going on. So that if you're strengthening the community ties, you'll have a more likely chance of finding someone than if you are only doing analytics.

The professor suggested that one Andy Papachristos has these amazing social network maps that could help profiling. If someone is closely connected to a person that's been arrested, then that individual is more likely to also be arrested. Similarly, if an individual has a gun, his friend is more likely to also have a gun. So if law enforcement is using network maps, they may be able to implicate close ties to gun offenders of offending themselves.

Following that line of thought, Commissioner Boykin suggested that the county has younger and younger people doing the shooting and getting shot. The day before the task force, in the Austin district, four young teens were shot – 12 to 16 years old. The commissioner wondered if research has shown that more young people are getting shot. He suggested that something like a Respect-for-Life, peace-and-love campaign could help.

"That's part of the solution," Professor Pollack said. He explained that there's a harm reduction intervention hashtag now among gang members –that if they see a rival gang member with his kid, they shouldn't use violence against him. He further suggested that there's a hunger for rebuilding these communities, and summer jobs are really helpful for reducing violence. He had four empty homes in his own community. People are generally blind to the economic toll of gun violence to these communities, he said. Adults in these neighborhoods are stressed. He stated that the way that

young people are going to stop getting involved in violence is to see that their parents are good and happy. He thinks that they should link the socioeconomic issues and the violence.

Chief Davis said in a recent shooting in his town, the victim survived. They had an offender in custody. The victim stated that he was “from the streets” and that “snitches get stitches” and so would not proceed with a case. The victim was 21 years old. His mother called to find out the status of the case. His mom stated that he was not from the streets. “He’s from a 2 parent household, at 163rd in Hazelwood.” But since his parents had left, he identified himself as from the streets. The chief stated that he would like to address the community as a whole so that even the young man has accountability within the community, even if his parents are gone.

“I have no University of Chicago elegant analytic response to that,” Pollack said. He recommended a book called Ghetto Side about kids who feel that if something really bad happens to them, nobody can protect them. So they’re afraid to snitch. It’s a real challenge. Witness protection services are so important. People know who did it but will not say. Individuals were using it as an excuse, and a mindset. A lot of the retaliatory killings are due to these sorts of incidents. The professor went out with Cease Fire interrupters a few years ago. There was an upset 12 year old that had attacked an older gentleman, and the gentleman’s family was coming out to retaliate, while the kid’s family was defending him. The violence was cyclical.

V) COST OF NON-FATAL SHOOTINGS Dr. Michelle Gittler, medical director of Schwab Rehabilitation Hospital, described her work with individuals who had been shot and had gunshot wounds, specifically those that survived. About the costs that society does not think about because the shooting is not fatal. No statistic can tell how many non-fatal gunshot wounds are out there, or brain injuries, or spinal cord injuries due to gunshot wounds. She stated that she would describe this to make people angrier.

Most people that are shot don’t die. There are 3 to 7 to 11 non-fatal injuries for every fatal gunshot wound. This is an enormous burden. They are individuals who are disabled for life, have colostomy bags, have lost limbs, have brain damage.

She then painted picture with stories of individuals. The first is a 16 year old that sustained a gunshot wound to his belly. He was sent home in February. He couldn’t close his belly due to swelling. He lost both legs. He was placed on dialysis. His family was a mess. Now that he has survived, he’s a bi-lateral amputee. He probably will never have gainful employment. There is a cost to the hospital stay, prosthesis, and lost wages of a child that isn’t going to be working for his entire life.

Another had a gunshot wound to the neck, at 24 years old. The individual can’t feed himself, can’t bathe, and can’t get out of bed. He has to stay in the hospital. Following a gunshot wound to the head, many people are permanently handicapped, require a tube, and 24 hour care. These individuals require healthcare and are never going to work.

The doctor then shared a few numbers. Quadriplegic individuals who survive a shot to the neck will cost 250,000 dollars in the first year. Each subsequent year will cost 200k on average. Our hospitals are great at saving lives now, but to what end? If an individual can’t get housing due to his criminal background, he may be in a nursing home, where he’s getting pressure sores, isn’t working, and is depressed.

The doctor looked at 56 consecutive individuals – a large group that had been previously shot. The largest single factor in people with a serious gun injury was a previous injury. Thirty-six percent of

them had previously been shot. Another 16-18 percent had a violent injury that led to them being treated. Half of them had been involved in the criminal justice system. And had never had counseling. And never spoke on conflict resolution or illiteracy. The disability aspect affects them for their entire lives. It's an enormous financial burden on their communities and a loss of talent. It's a brain drain.

Coordinator Anton asked Dr. Gittler about individuals who are illiterate – they can't read the instructions that she writes them. They can't integrate conflict resolution or anger management. In terms of intervention and rehab, can it take place later in their lives?

The doctor suggested the In My Shoes program. Where Schwab identified people in the juvenile justice system with debilitating injuries. They created job training programs with individuals that were normally not going to be employed, and employed them directly at Schwab, giving other individuals mentorship.

Commissioner Boykin stated that he believes the price of gun violence is higher than 2.5 billion dollars to the County. He asked: How do we not go bankrupt? To which the doctor responded that we've already gone bankrupt. The commissioner responded that maybe that was true of the city, but not the county. The doctor continued by stating that every time a person continues to live longer, the costs to the government increase. We live at a time of extraordinary technology – but we're going to go bankrupt if we take care of people. The flipside is we don't take care of people.

She continued by suggesting that we need an Office for People with Disabilities that functions as the disability advocate for all of these individuals who are being shot in the suburban County. She said the population is voiceless, both before and after shooting., adding, “We’re very bad in health care doing what we would call ‘functional restoration.’”

Commissioner Boykin inquired about some sort of debt clock that shows the cost of gun violence to the city and the county, if that would be helpful. The doctor responded that anything that scares people and startles them is helpful, but that people have to see it.

Following this line of thought, Dr. Joseph asked about intensive case management and prolonged involvement –that there is evidence that this increases recidivism. She asked if the doctor could talk about what happens to the patients that experience chronic pain who self-medicate. The doctor indicated that this group of individuals is at risk for failing out of schools. That chronic pain is something that they are just getting their arms around. A number of these individuals have pain and are given inadequate pain medicine, and are told to go to their primary care doctor. So they resort to self-medication. Heroin is a lot cheaper on the street than the prescription opioids. Additionally, pain management programs are very difficult to administer. They have to do pill counts, monitor individuals for diversion, and take care of people’s pain, not just with pills. But for psychology and behavioral pain, using occupational therapy that can make an individual functional. “We’re very bad in health care doing what we would call ‘functional restoration,’” Dr. Gittler said.

VI) COMMUNITIES

COMMUNITIES The final expert witness was Dr. Terry Mason – COO of the Cook County Department of Public Health. The doctor stated that he was there to offer some testimony; That he's lived it himself. His brother was a patient at Stroger Hospital. He grew up in Englewood – it was a totally different place then. Moved there in 1958 when it was a predominantly white community. Within 2 years, the neighborhood totally changed. One of the things was the diversity in

types of people – there were postal workers, teachers, steel mill workers. Everybody that worked there had a job. There were two people in the household usually.

The doctor stated that everybody's mother was your mother. Everybody's father was your father. So one would receive multiple doses of justice before the police even got involved. He stated that he also had cousins that lived in the Robert Taylor Homes. At that time, if you were on welfare, you couldn't have a man or a phone in the house. He stated that many of the things that we're talking about today are about the destruction of the family.

The doctor recently asked a kid, "What would you like to be when you grow up?" To which the kid responded, "alive." The kid explained to the doctor that just getting from his house to school day-to-day was work. That it is almost impossible not to join a gang. That he couldn't answer questions in class, because it was not fashionable to be smart. (From Losing the Race.)

The doctor looked at the readiness level from CVS High School today, and few of those individuals are ready for college. At his school, less than 3 percent are ready. At some, it's less than 1%. Yet we are graduating people at 70%. We are pushing people out that have no ability to do anything. They can't read, they can't write, and they can't compete. He stated that there are consequences to black self-hatred. That it's from slavery and that can't be minimalized. These are all parts of the Euro-centric society, he said: girls choosing white dolls over black dolls -- seeing the black girls as ugly and inferior. Many black children have lower self-esteem. And they may project that onto other black people as well. He stated that this leads individuals to believe that they can take this life rather cavalierly without worrying about it.

The doctor stated that if one adds this feeling of self-hatred to self-medication, individuals are ready to do some very irresponsible things. This is the unspoken core of what the task force is talking about: that there's no easy fix to this gun problem.

The doctor's nephew was recently shot. He stated that we have had violence in a country that was founded on mass-murder. That continues the perpetration of this on countries outside of the United States. He advocated programs that restore the value to being black. He stated that the language changed in the 70s. While black people used to call one another brother, they now use the n-word. He stated that the only place where he had seen someone doing a decent job at rehabilitating the mental health of black people was the Nation of Islam. They underwent a mental laundromat exercise. He was once a member.

He stated that in the household, nothing that they see gives a child value; that they hear that, "they are bad and they are cursed and they are just like their no good..." to which the audience responded, "Daddy".

The doctor stated that there are children that really want a chance to do something. That the biggest opportunities are the economic drivers, that children need jobs.

The doctor stated that if we don't employ these kids, that if we cut and cut and cut resources, we are only fueling the prison pipeline. Additionally, the doctor stated that he believes that many children are suffering from fetal alcohol syndrome. In the first three months the brain and neural tube are being developed. He saw the effect as people with disrupted behavior, branded as having ADHD.

Finally, he closed by saying that there may be a combination that works together, with the County government, to help.

Commissioner Boykin had a question for the doctor, stating that he grew up in Englewood in 1968 and went to the aforementioned vocational high school. He asked what the committee can do, reinforcing the Sheriff's question, asking what small things can this committee propose? Without legislation from Springfield.

The doctor responded by saying that this is not a small problem – that he can't answer the question because he doesn't have an answer. But that we should first do a resource analysis on what the County has. That we could use the Department of Economic Development, working with the state. The goal would be to get more jobs. Finally, he stated that for the people who have never worked, and for the generations of people that have never worked, we shouldn't be surprised if they don't turn out so good.

VII) PUBLIC SPEAKER Mr. George Blakemore spoke for a few minutes on the miseducation of the black man. He stated that the school education system shows the slave system before and after. He stated that guns don't kill people but people kill people. That they make choices, spiritual choices. And that black people have forgotten where they come from. He believed that certain acts will be committed not because it's in their DNA but in their spirit. That a person broke, during slavery times, and that the spirit has never recovered.

He suggested that the murder rate, the police shootings, and black on black crime all go back to slavery. That they never got their reparation – monetary nor psychological.

He asked for jobs, goods, services, and contracts. He stated that there's big money in guns and ghettos.

VIII) CLOSING AND ADJOURNMENT Coordinator Anton asked the task force for final questions. Chief Davis asked for everyone's prayers for the individuals that have been shot in the last few days, including two police officers shot. One young officer, Tim Jones, was shot in a house presumed vacant that turned out to have someone inside. He stated that the officer did everything procedurally that he was meant to do. He went to apprehend the man and was shot in the brain. The chief stated that the officer is 24 years old, just on the job. That his dad is the police chief of Country Club Hills. The gunshot wound was caused by a gun stolen out of Texas.

The next meeting of the Cook County Gun Violence Task Force was scheduled for the 19th of April.